**PRESIDENT’S AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP**

**Michael B. Kruger, Ph.D.**
Curators’ Professor of Physics
Chair, Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Missouri-Kansas City

Dr. Michael Kruger joined the UMKC faculty in 1993 and quickly rose through the ranks as a well-respected leader. He is recognized throughout the physics community as an innovative scholar and teacher with over 60 published articles, many awards and research funding totaling more than $1 million.

For the past nine years, Kruger has chaired the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Under his leadership, the department has witnessed substantial increases in external funding, enrollments, student credit hour production, scholarships and additional majors. Under his advising, the Society of Physics Students has greatly expanded interest among physics majors and non-majors alike. It has become a nationally recognized chapter and hosted the regional undergraduate research meeting this spring.

Kruger leads by building consensus among the faculty and encourages them to continually seek to improve the department and expand their impact through both teaching and research. Through strategic hiring and reorganization, the department expanded to include astronomy degrees and a pre-med physics track, and increased external funding five-fold. In addition, improved relations with alumni and emeriti faculty has resulted in considerable growth in the scholarship endowment.

“He has transformed the department into a highly energized faculty group. He has taken a complex and sophisticated discipline and made it accessible to students and the community,” wrote one nominator.

Kruger’s emphasis on high quality teaching and outreach has fostered strong alliances with area high schools and community colleges, improving student recruitment and retention. He established an annual Physics Phest event to bring nearly 300 high school students to campus to explore careers in physics and science. He has also developed interesting, relevant and popular courses for non-majors, such as Physics of Sports and Physics for Future Presidents.

**PRESIDENT’S AWARD FOR CROSS-CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT**

**Rita M. Csapó-Sweet, Ed.D.**
Associate Professor of Theater, Dance and Media Studies
University of Missouri-St. Louis

Since joining the UMSL faculty in 1990, Dr. Rita Csapó-Sweet has persistently worked to establish Hungarian and Eastern European educational and cultural exchange opportunities for the UMSL and St. Louis metropolitan communities.

Csapó-Sweet has been engaged in Eastern European artistic collaborations, such as curating films for the St. Louis International Film Festival and the St. Louis Art Museum, as well as curating several art exhibits on the UMSL campus.

While her area of expertise is primarily in film, her vision to establish institutional links with the University of Debrecen in Hungary, the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia, and the University of Dubrovnik in Croatia, has cut across the disciplines. Two UMSL students have already benefited from the Study in Bosnia Program and Bosnian students will be coming to UMSL this fall. Last spring, Csapó-Sweet led a delegation of UMSL faculty, including Chancellor Tom George, to Sarajevo and Dubrovnik to lecture and perform American art, music and film.

Her efforts have not only opened an artistic cultural exchange, but have facilitated discussions about war and tolerance, and helped reconnect generations of refugees with their heritage. One student notes, “Her encouragement and support kept me going and continue to inspire me to pursue my passion for all things Bosnia. As a result of my abroad experience, my goal is to become an advocate for immigrant and refugee rights.”

These partnerships not only promote student and faculty exchanges, but expand opportunities for faculty research collaboration and the development of critical academic programs. Csapó-Sweet’s passion for developing cross-cultural ties and enhancing the understanding and appreciation for cultural differences has created a legacy that promises to endure beyond her tenure at UMSL.